

## A Book of the Week.

### THE LIFE AND DEATH OF RICHARD YEA-AND-NAY.\*

Those who have written one notable book—such a book as almost marks a new departure in current fiction—as did Mr. Hewlett, have always to face the fact that their public will expect the next effort to equal or surpass the first. They are somewhat in the position of Richard Feverell's father, who, in company of the lady who so admired his aphorisms, was trammelled by the constant necessity of living up to his reputation, in George Meredith's wonderful story.

We must then confess that "Richard Yea-and-Nay" is by no means equal to "The Forest Lovers" or the inimitable "Little Novels of Italy," though it is far more ambitious than either of them.

But to say this is by no means to speak disapprovingly of it. Had we not read the other books by the same author, this one would be certainly pronounced most remarkable.

It is the story of that Richard of Anjou whom we know as Lion Hearted, but who was nicknamed by Bertran de Born, the giver of nicknames to all Europe, "Richard Yea-and-Nay."

The world knows Richard as a picturesque figure, having the family vices with many a saving grace—soldier, poet, crusader, spendthrift—a captivating *melée* of qualities, more attractive when seen through a vista of years than they most probably were to his more decorous and law abiding subjects in the lawless days of his absentee reign.

The story shows how the King's life was made and marred by his love for Jehane of Saint Pol; Jehane of the Fair Girdle, whom Bertran de Born named Bel Vezer. For this girl Richard's love was of a fine quality, but owing to the strife of natures within him, he had neither the courage to leave her, nor the courage openly to avow her.

The girl in her nobility, knowing herself albeit of gentle blood, not high enough to mate with a king, first sent him from her. Then, being freed from his troth to the sister of the King of France, and hearing of Jehane as about to be married, his passion mastered him, and he carried off his bride at the very altar. Having married poor Jehane, and made her Countess of Poitou, his father's death called him to be King of England, and here again the self-sacrifice of this remarkable girl led her to decline coronation—and that although she knew she was to be a mother—and to further the Queen Dowager's design to wed the king to Berengère of Navarre. When all was settled, and the wedding could not be delayed, Richard discovered for the first time that Jehane was likely to bear him a child; and so left Queen Berengère upon his marriage day, and saw her again but once, when on his death-bed.

Jehane, following the Court to Palestine with her little son, Fulke of Anjou, learnt that Conrad of Montferrat had designs upon the life of the King. She therefore went to the Old Man of Musse, and bargained to sell herself to him, if he would employ assassins to murder Conrad. It seems to the modern reader hardly consistent that Jehane, who was content to live in celibacy for the king's sake, and knew that he held her in such high honour that he also, though married, was

\* By Maurice Hewlett. Macmillan & Co.

living virgin for her sake should imagine that the King would care for life at the price of her dishonour. But Mr. Hewlett has studied the chronicles of the time—almost too thoroughly—and doubtless knows best. But the whole episode of the marriage and after life of the beautiful woman in the harem is most revolting to English readers.

The personality of Richard is finely imagined, and so is the stratagem of the horrible old Man of Musse, whereby the king meets his death as prophesied, though Jehane knows it not.

The story certainly sheds a new light upon history, but whether of a trustworthy kind it is not possible to say.

G. M. R.

## Verses.

### IS IT DEGENERATE?

Is it degenerate to fall from Wealth,  
To live in straitened shores, on scantier fare,  
To put on homespun, and to house in bare  
Simplicity, the hardy nurse of health?  
Is it degenerate, if Power or Stealth  
Pluck from the brow uncertain coronet,  
And unsubstantial pride of sword or gun,  
And make a realm on which sun never set,  
A realm of spirit needing not the sun?  
Nay, these are accidents which never yet  
Could hurt nobility. But one thing may  
Brand on our brow the mark "Degenerate":  
To lose the vision of the truly Great,  
And lapse from effort on the starry Way!

ROBERT F. HORTON, in *Good Words*.

## What to Read.

- "New Rhymes for Old, and other Verses." By A. C. Deane.
- "The Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain." By J. A. Cramb, M.A.
- "Life of the Emperor Frederick." Edited from the German by Margareta von Poschinger. With an Introduction by Sidney Whitman.
- "Children of Scorn, and Medical Papers." By Lady Cook.
- "The Inhabitants of the Phillipines." By Frederick H. Sawyer, M.I.C.E.
- "The Lane that had no Turning." By Gilbert Parker.
- "As a Watch in the Night; A Drama of Waking and Dream." By Mrs. Campbell Praed.
- "The Inimitable Mrs. Massingham; A Romance of Botany Bay." By Herbert Compton.
- "Yolande the Parisienne." By Lucas Cleeve.
- "The Magic Mist, and other Dartmoor Legends." By Eva C. Rogers.

## Coming Events.

December 31st.—Special Service at St. Paul's and other churches to mark the close of the Nineteenth Century, 7 p.m.

January 1st.—New Year's Day. Twentieth Century.

January 10th.—Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Matrons' Council 4.15 p.m. and of the General Council at 4.30 p.m., Matron's House, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, E.C.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)